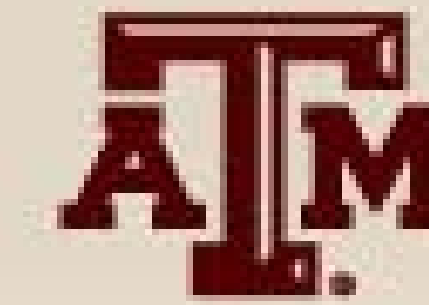


# Montague – CTE Scholar Charles Lafon (2004-2005)



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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Department of Geography, College of Geosciences



Montague-CTE funding has permitted several activities benefitting undergraduate education. One of those was the opportunity to take three undergraduate students on a field research trip to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee, to assist M.S. student Ellen Gass with data collection for her thesis research on wildfire patterns. We already had money to support the travel of Ms. Gass and three other graduate students, but Montague-CTE provided the extra bit needed for the undergraduates to join and gain some “hands-on” field experience. I recruited the undergraduates from my large core-curriculum science course in introductory physical geography (GEOG 203). One was a business student, who enjoyed the fieldwork so much that he decided to pick up a geography minor. Another, a geography/economics double-major, became so enthusiastic with the work that he has decided to pursue graduate study around a related theme.



Undergraduate student recording field measurements in a recently burned pine forest.  
Photo by Ellen Gass.



Photo of prescribed fire, by Steve Croy.



Undergraduate student measuring vegetation characteristics in a recently burned oak forest.  
Photo by Ellen Gass.

This project contributes to my larger research and teaching program related to the history of fire and its influences on vegetation. Following decades of fire suppression, many resource managers are reintroducing fire to restore decadent fire-dependent plant and animal communities. The students were able to contribute to work that provides tangible benefits for resource management.